

**The Bridge Association
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**Directors' Report
For the year ended 31 March 2023**

The Directors present their annual report together with the audited financial statements of the Company for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The Directors confirm that the Annual Report and financial statements of the charitable Company comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the charitable Company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102).

Objectives and activities

a. Policies and objectives

We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

Through the wide range of occupational training programmes carried out by the Company, The Bridge Association endeavours to provide relief and rehabilitation for Learning Disabilities for mentally and physically disabled persons.

Achievements and Performance

a. Review of activities

The Bridge Association has continued to raise levels of confidence, basic social/living skills, numeracy, literacy and IT skills for each trainee. In the year 2022/23 the total number of trainees was 39 (2021/22: 37 trainees), all of whom gained a number of units within the City & Guilds/NVQ structures.

The Association has continued to be a provider stakeholder within the Learning Disability strategy, benchmarked as forward thinking, innovative and meeting best practice with all Health and Social Care Trusts.

Northern Health & Social Care Trust (NHSCT) has now fully implemented all Direct Payment agreements at the correct hourly rate so that in the future an uplift percentage increase can be implemented from the 1 April in each incoming financial year going forward. The NHSCT will not restrict the amount of placements that they could request on a year to year basis.

The Association has continued to directly ring fence the equivalent of 10 full time and 2 two-day Direct Payment places for the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) during 2022/23. We have now secured a further 2 full time direct payment placements and are on target to fill the remaining ring fenced placements in 2023/24.

The Association has continued to develop, with the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BHSCT), the three strands of funding within the SDS programme i.e. Direct Payments from the Trainees, Care Management payments on behalf of the Trainees and Direct Trust payments for placements. The Association had directly ring fenced the equivalent of 2 full time and 1 two-day Direct Payment places for their future needs through to 2023/24. We secured a further 1 four-day Direct Payment placement for 2022/23.

The Association has been working closely with the Education Boards and other Social Care Trusts to highlight that the Training Unit is open to all clients with a Learning disability to purchase a place directly using Direct Payments.

Covid-19 still affected and disrupted the day to day running of the Unit for a period of time during 2022 - 2023. As a result we had continued to implement Covid-19 measures as directed by the PHA and the Association undertook the following measures:

- The comprehensive COVID-19 risk assessment was kept under review on a monthly basis with all Social Services Trusts.

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**Directors' Report (continued)
For the year ended 31 March 2023**

Achievements and Performance (continued)

(continued)

- Management reviewed all policies/procedures to reflect the continued changes created by COVID-19 and carried out additional staff training in October 2022 in relation to infection control, challenging behaviours and mental wellbeing.

During the year the Association has continued to develop, secure and enhance Bridge Quirky Emporium Social Enterprise in order to promote and provide up-cycling, crafting and retail training in a real setting for all the trainees attending the training unit.

The dedicated What's App groups where we share all relevant training unit and government information are working well. We maintained full GDPR compliance in relation to these.

The Association's Trainee Committee is fully functional in working closely with the Senior Management Team on the trainees' aspirations and requirements for the New Training Unit. Reports from the Committee are presented to the Board for further discussion.

We worked towards developing our new Training Unit/Community Hub on the site previously purchased in February 2022. The land and new training facility/community hub will be owned and managed by the Charity in order to secure its future stability. During 2022 two working teams had been established and by November 2022 one had completed a Business Economic Appraisal and the other had developed the building drawings etc to tender stage.

Financial review

a. Going concern

Given the continued support of the Health & Social Care Trusts and their acknowledgement of the valuable work by the charity in providing high quality training and rehabilitation, the directors are confident in the future of the Association and consider the going concern basis for the preparation of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 to be appropriate.

b. Reserves policy

It is the Association's policy to try to maintain unrestricted reserves equivalent to 3 months revenue expenditure in order to a) cover short term fluctuations in funding and b) ensure an orderly rundown of the organisation should future funding be unobtainable. Whilst at year end, this amounted to less than one month due to the investment of cash resources in progressing plans for the new training unit, the directors keep the reserves position under regular review.

Structure, governance and management

a. Constitution

The company is registered as a charitable company limited by guarantee and was set up by a Memorandum of Association on 8th March 1988. The Association gained Charity Status with the Charity Commission in May 2018 and our Charity Number is NIC107046.

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**Directors' Report (continued)
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Structure, governance and management (continued)

b. Methods of appointment or election of Directors

The management of the Company is the responsibility of the Directors who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Memorandum of Association.

c. Pay policy for senior staff

The Joint Managing Directors, who are also Trustees, receive remuneration at a level set by the Board. This remuneration is fully disclosed in these financial statements.

d. Organisational structure and decision making

Day to day decision making is undertaken by the Executive Directors, Mrs J Barnes and Mr D Edmont, with regular reporting to the Board. Decisions on strategy, policy and material capital expenditure are taken by the full Board.

Plans for future periods

The Board had previously approved that the Association will hold an Open week in April each year until such times as 51 placements have been filled and a waiting list of 5 has been created in order to ensure the future stability of the training unit. This had been curtailed however, due to Covid, but we now plan to hold our annual Open Week in April 2024 as we have confidence that the Covid restrictions have been lifted enough to allow for this important showcasing to continue.

We will continue to work towards our plan to build a new Training Unit/ Community Hub and Social Enterprise and will continue developing closer working relationships with The Junction, Castle Mall, Antrim Enterprise Agency, Mallusk Enterprise Agency, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council, The Lottery Fund and CO3 in order to develop and access grant/funding aid towards building this project.

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**Directors' Report (continued)
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Statement of Directors' responsibilities

The Directors (who are also the directors of the Company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report including the Strategic Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial . Under company law, the Directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP (FRS 102);
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards (FRS 102) have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Company will continue in business.

The Directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditors

Each of the persons who are Directors at the time when this Directors' Report is approved has confirmed that:

- so far as that Director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditors are unaware, and
- that Director has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a Director in order to be aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditors

Given the increase in our activity levels we now require an annual audit. The auditors, ASM (B) Ltd, have indicated their willingness to continue in office and a motion to propose their re-appointment will be put to the AGM.

Approved by order of the members of the board of Directors and signed on their behalf by:

Date: 18 December 2023




J Barnes, Director
D Edmott, Director